

## FACT SHEET

## CYCLOSPORA

### What is *Cyclospora*?

*Cyclospora* is a parasite that is too small to be seen with the naked eye. Its full name is *Cyclospora cayetanensis*. Cases of *Cyclospora* infection (cyclosporiasis) have been reported with increased frequency since the mid-1980s. In the last several years, outbreaks of cyclosporiasis have been reported in the United States and Canada.

### How is *Cyclospora* spread?

*Cyclospora* is spread by swallowing water or food that was contaminated with infected stool. For example, outbreaks of cyclosporiasis have been linked to various types of fresh produce. We do not know how common the various ways of spread are. It is unknown if animals can be infected and spread infection to humans.

*Cyclospora* is not infectious at the time it is passed in bowel movements. The parasite does not become infectious until days to weeks after it is excreted. Because of this, direct person-to-person transmission is unlikely. However, so-called indirect transmission might occur. For example, *Cyclospora* might be spread if stool from an infected person contaminates something in the "environment" (for example, water) to which someone else is exposed after the parasite has had time to become infectious.

### Who gets *Cyclospora*?

Persons of all ages are at risk for infection. However people living in or traveling to developing countries may be at increased risk, infections also occur in the United States and Canada. The risk may vary with the season. Evidence suggests that infection is most common in spring and summer.

### What are the symptoms of *Cyclospora*?

*Cyclospora* infects the small intestine (bowel). It typically causes watery diarrhea with frequent possibly explosive stools. Other symptoms can include loss of appetite, weight loss, bloating, increased gas, stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting, tiredness, muscle aches, and low-grade fever. Some persons infected with *Cyclospora* do not develop any symptoms.

### How soon do symptoms appear?

The time between being infected and becoming sick is usually about 1 week.

### How long will symptoms last?

If left untreated the illness usually lasts for a few days to a month or longer and symptoms may come back one or more times. Persons with weakened immune systems may experience symptoms for a longer period of time if infected with *Cyclospora*.

### What should you do if you think you may be infected?

If you think you may be infected with *Cyclospora*, you should see your healthcare provider. Stool specimens will need to be tested to identify the parasite. More than one stool sample may need to be checked to find the parasite.

### Can infection with *Cyclospora* occur more than once?

Yes. Persons who have been infected with *Cyclospora* once can become infected again.

### How can infection be prevented?

Avoiding water or food that may be contaminated with stool may help prevent *Cyclospora* infection. An infected person should wash their hands often to prevent the spread of infection and thoroughly wash fruits and vegetables before eating.